



President George W. Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS is the largest commitment ever by any nation for an international health initiative dedicated to a single disease—a five-year, \$15 billion, multifaceted approach to combating the disease in more than 120 countries around the world.

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*U.S. Agency for International Development*

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*U.S. Department of Commerce*

*U.S. Department of Labor*

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

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## Critical Interventions: *Stigma*

Stigma and discrimination around HIV and AIDS continue to fuel the global pandemic, exacerbating existing social inequalities, keeping people from being tested and learning their status, and preventing HIV-positive persons from accessing much-needed services.

Negative perceptions of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) among health workers can affect the quality of care they provide. Negative attitudes about PLWHA also create a climate in which people become more afraid of the stigma and discrimination associated with the disease than the disease itself – creating barriers to prevention, treatment and care. Under national strategies and in coordination with host governments, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan) is supporting efforts to break down the barriers of stigma that impede access to HIV prevention, treatment, and care.

The following stories are just a few examples of how the Emergency Plan is supporting national strategies and working with host nations to fight the denial and stigma that fuel the pandemic.

### **Work is “More than Medicine” for People Living with HIV/AIDS**

The focused and sustained involvement

of PLWHA is a key aspect of a U.S. Government-supported project in India. Members of PLWHA networks have been empowered by the project to reach out to key people like trade unions, employers, government and present their concerns, and their involvement has been instrumental in

breaking the silence and overcoming denial. “We, the people living with HIV/AIDS, face discrimination on a daily basis. We can work. Please understand that we pose no risk to our fellow colleagues. Work is more than medicine to us. It keeps us going and enables us to bring home food and medicine,” says Naveen Kumar, whose public statements helped many people to see the human face of the epidemic for the first time. Businesses, trade unions and employers are embracing

the idea of keeping people living with HIV/AIDS in employment and creating a non-discriminatory environment for these individuals.

### **Nigerian Dee Jays and Musicians Combat Stigma Associated with Testing for HIV**

Radio deejays in Nigeria's three biggest cities are delivering lifesaving messages to an audience of nearly 40 million people—most of them youth—after learning how to integrate HIV/AIDS information into their broadcasts at training courses funded by the Emergency Plan.

**The U.S. Government is keeping its promise to fight stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS...**

The 10-day courses, conducted by the Local Voices project, helped 39 deejays and four musicians improve their knowledge of HIV/AIDS and understand the role they could play in encouraging their young listeners to be tested and get counseling. After learning about HIV testing at Wuse General Hospital in Abjua, all the trainees decided to be tested, and now they talk



**The Black Family & Skufaze encourage listeners to “know your status” in their popular rap.**

about the experience on their shows. As a class project, rap singers, the Black Family & Skufaze, wrote a song about counseling and testing that made Nigeria’s top-ten list. Hanlele, which means “hurry up,” advises listeners, “You’ve got to know your status.... HIV is an issue you should not refuse to listen to.”

“Other bands sing about girls, love, and silly stuff, but we like to sing about the things that matter and make a difference for Nigerians,” explains the group’s lead singer. By serving as role models, the Nigerian deejays and musicians are helping to break the stigma associated with testing for HIV/AIDS.

### **Raising Awareness and Fighting Stigma in Vietnam**

In Vietnam, PLWHA are strongly discriminated against and stigmatized, despite the prohibition of discrimination by Vietnam’s Ordinance on HIV/AIDS. While several international and national nongovernmental organizations work with PLWHA, this work lacked coordination until recently. In the last two years, great strides have been

made. With U.S. Government funding, a partner organization began working with PLWHA groups based on the belief that greater involvement of PLWHA and promotion of their human rights are crucial for an effective national response to HIV/AIDS.

Pham Thi Hue received training and support from the U.S. Government-sponsored program. She was infected with HIV by her husband who was a heroin addict. Rather than being shamed into silence, the 25-year old seamstress and mother went public and appeared on television and at conferences. Although her business suffered and she experienced harassment from her neighbors, Hue has now become the public face of Mothers and Wives, an HIV/AIDS support group. Through her brave leadership, Pham Thi Hue is breaking the barriers of stigma.

### **Short Documentaries Fight HIV Prejudice in Zambia**

*Tikambe* (Let’s Talk About It) is the title of two short video documentaries produced in Zambia with funding from the Emergency Plan. The videos address the stigma and discrimination that PLWHA often experience. *Banja La Yengwe* portrays the lives of Paul and Alice Phiri Yengwe and their six children. Both HIV-positive, Paul and Alice are shunned until their family and neighbors realize that the Yengwes have a strong relationship, and that their HIV status is nothing to fear. *Harriet* portrays the life of Harriet Mulenga, whose mother and sister are ashamed of Harriet’s HIV-positive status. When Harriet falls ill, her mother and sister realize that Harriet needs their support. They help Harriet get antiretroviral medicines and her health returns.

Both films were produced by the Zambia Integrated Health Programme, the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV and the U.S. Government.

**“Today, people are learning to live with AIDS, rather than preparing to die from it. Many people are getting tested, and they’re revealing their diagnosis. Through their courage, they’re breaking down stereotypes and stripping away the stigma that’s often attached to AIDS.”**

**First Lady Laura Bush  
September 15, 2005**

**President George W. Bush’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief** is working in 15 of the nations most impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in other nations worldwide to keep the American people’s commitment to support treatment for 2 million HIV-infected people, support prevention of 7 million new infections, and support care for 10 million HIV-infected individuals and AIDS orphans.